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ABSTRACT

An integrated system is needed to measure multiple attributes of effective teaching. The use of portfolios holds particular promise for this type of assessment. This paper describes how portfolios can be used in the evaluation of student teaching by evaluating management, creativity, organization, and effectiveness. Learning to teach is a life-long process, and portfolios can provide a continuing basis for the student teacher's subsequent professional growth. For most purposes, a portfolio will consist of: (1) a one-page vita that contains the elements of a job seeker's resume; (2) a professional development plan; (3) a collection of "artifacts" created by the student teachers; and (4) an optional section of log entries and investigations conducted by the student teacher. Specific strategies are suggested for the implementation of portfolio assessment with the student teacher or with the first-year teacher. Portfolios allow for summative assessment, but their purpose is formative. Along with valuative and developmental feedback, a portfolio will give a full portrayal of student teaching. (Contains 10 references.) (SLD)

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Using Portfolios to Assess Student Teacher Progress

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Introduction

When assessing student teacher progress, we should not be searching for a test or observation instrument. Instead, an integrated system is needed to measure multiple attributes of effective teaching. A comprehensive, multi-dimensional system should be used in the assessment effort and the use of portfolios holds particular promise (Ryan and Kuhs, 1993). Field experiences are often difficult to capture and measure. Student teaching progress can even be harder to monitor. Many college supervisors find themselves forced to rely primarily on reports from cooperating teachers (and their own infrequent classroom observations of teaching performance). Value is assigned to cooperating teacher reports because these mentors normally spend the entire day with the student teacher while the college supervisor visits the student teaching site only occasionally during the semester. Perhaps portfolio usage can remove reliance on outside reporting of student teacher progress and supplement infrequent observations of teaching performance.

Some might argue that additional valuative measures are available to those supervising student teachers; for example, comprehensive examinations to evaluate the success of graduates. Barton and Collins (1993) contrast portfolios with comprehensive exams and find that portfolios give both student and supervisor more opportunity for reflection on student growth and change throughout the course of the program -- an opportunity that does not exist with a one time, exit-oriented exam. The portfolio reveals a lot about its compiler. When carefully assembled it becomes an intersection of instruction and assessment: they (portfolios) are not just instruction or assessment but, rather, both (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991).

A Definition

Kramer (1993) calls the portfolio itself an assessment tool. She defines it as a student work that documents the process of learning and individual growth. Cramer (1993) states that the portfolio itself is not a type of assessment but an assessment tool. Tierney (1992) calls portfolios a mean for dynamic and ongoing assessment, not merely folders containing random accumulations of student work. In answering what makes a portfolio a portfolio, Paulson, Paulson and Meyer (1993), feel that a document is a portfolio when it provides a complex and comprehensive view of student performance in context. Writing portfolios are probably the widest usage of the portfolio concept and is in many ways similar to the portfolios artists assemble in order to gain admittance into art school or secure a commission. In their discussion of teacher portfolios, Perkins and Gelfer (1993), state that teacher portfolios represent the teacher's management, creativity, organization, and effectiveness. They list samples of expected teacher competencies and also discuss selection of contents and evaluation of the portfolios. The following describes how portfolios can be used to evaluate student teaching within (but, not limited to) these four areas; management, creativity, organization and effectiveness. First, additional reasons for portfolio use are given. Then, an implementation plan is outlined including assignment techniques as well as a discussion of what should be included in the finished product, how it is organized and lastly, how it is evaluated.

Why Use Portfolios?

Teaching is a complex activity. It has a broad range and is the simultaneous orchestration of students, curriculum, instruction, assessment, resources and clerical duties. There are a large number of interactions and literally hundreds of daily decisions to make. Student teachers must learn to make all of these factors part of their routine. Portfolios provide a way of assessing how well student teachers meet the daily demands of teaching.

Learning to teach requires a deep and rich understanding of content. Portfolios provide opportunity for student teachers to show that they have mastered relevant content areas. Teaching is contextual. Since there are no two students, classes, or schools that are alike effective teaching can vary from situation to situation. There are no clearly defined set of rules that exist for successful teaching. Portfolios since they are developed over time, take into account the larger context of the classroom and school. Learning to teach is a life-long process. Portfolios provide a continuing basis for the student teacher's subsequent professional growth. Portfolios provide an orderly manner to assess student teachers and can be valuable in establishing faculty consistency in supervision.

Portfolio Components

For most purposes a portfolio will consist of four major areas. A one-page vita comprises the first section. It should include the elements of a brief job-seeker's resume. The second section contains a professional development plan. It lists the strengths and weaknesses of the student teacher. It also specifies what goals are attempted to accomplish the desired outcomes during the student teaching experience and offers strategies for how to achieve stated objectives. The third area can be thought of as a collection of "artifacts". Sample lesson plans,

student tests and student work should be included. Bulletin board ideas, samples of communication with parents, teachers and students are included. Indications of school involvement and professional development are listed. A self-assessment portion can be included which might show detailed records of meetings with teachers, administrators and college supervisors. The last section of the portfolio can be considered optional. For many student teachers, the first three sections alone will provide more than enough documentation and a challenging semester, but the supervising faculty may desire more material. If so, this section contains log entries of observations and investigations conducted by the student teacher. It can include written reactions to observations of PTA meetings, faculty meetings or perhaps observations of other student teachers and their cooperating mentors conducting class. It could also include interviews of the school principal, school secretary, volunteers, parents and students.

Implementation Strategies

When assigning portfolios, the following assignment and management techniques may prove helpful. Student teachers completing portfolios should:

- follow a table of contents closely
- be willing to meet with you often to plan revisions
- limit their samples and evidence
- use a 2" or 4" loose-leaf binder to contain all materials
- use plastic page protectors for each page
- expect to constantly revise their product
- use snap-shot pictures to enhance samples

- meet all deadlines
- be ready to defend their work
- plan to continue updating and polishing the product indefinitely

Several years ago, a midwestern state education department developed an internship program for beginning teachers. The main goal was to increase the likelihood that new teachers would experience success during their first year of teaching.

At a conference to assess the beginning teacher internship program, assistance given by resource teachers to beginning teachers was cited as a major strength and failure to provide guidance was seen as a major program weakness.

A handbook for resource teachers was developed (KTIP, 1995) to provide the best information available on research and experience obtained during the program's nine years of implementation. One of the more interesting parts of the handbook centered around some suggested activities to foster better intern and resource teacher interaction.

Since the two experiences, student teaching and first year teaching are somewhat related, the activities were examined with adaptation in mind. The following is the result of that examination with adaptations of some of those activities to the student teaching experience. It may prove helpful to include these activities when planning initial implementation of portfolio assessment:

1. Have a get acquainted session
2. Orient student teacher to school and district
3. Introduce student teacher to school personnel
4. Give overview of school and district policies

5. Establish class rules and consequences
6. Go to library to locate available materials
7. Order, share, and make instructional materials
8. Discuss usage of instructional materials
9. Review lesson plans
10. Review teacher's old plan books
11. Review curriculum guides
12. Design lessons for skills development
13. Videotape or tape record a lesson and review
14. Prepare appropriate bibliographies
15. Arrange for student teacher to observe master teachers
16. Read and discuss professional education articles
17. Attend professional meetings
18. Plan field trip for students
19. Sponsor a club/join a committee together
20. Visit computer lab
21. Make a packet for substitute teachers
22. Introduce student teacher to community resources
23. Discuss parent and/or student conferencing
24. Develop effective tests
25. Discuss grading system
26. Be the student teacher's "sounding board"

27. Prepare bulletin boards

28. Team teach

29. Help with required deadlines, reports, etc.

30. Work with inservice projects

Summary

Teaching is a complex activity. It has a broad range and is the simultaneous orchestration of students, curriculum, instruction, assessment, resources and clerical duties. There are a large number of interactions and literally hundreds of daily decisions to make. Student teachers must learn to make all of these factors part of their routine. Portfolios provide a partial solution to the dilemma of measuring student teacher performance. Although it allows for summative assessment, its primary purpose is formative. Armed with valuative and developmental feedback, continued crafting of the portfolio will give a full portrayal of student teaching.

Using portfolios allow student-teachers to evaluate their own performance and may build confidence, commitment and enthusiasm (Perkins and Gelfer, 1993). By using portfolios we can remove reliance on outside reporting of student teacher progress and supplement infrequent observations of teaching performance. Additionally, portfolios provide an orderly manner to assess progress, establish faculty consistency in supervision and result in an evidence file that student teachers can use in seeking full-time employment.

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